

EXHIBIT B



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POP CULTURE HAPPY HOUR

LISTEN & FOLLOW

< We process the explosive Drake-Kendrick beef

AISHA HARRIS, HOST:

Just a heads up. This episode contains explicit language and mention of alleged child sexual abuse and intimate partner violence.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

HARRIS: We're not quite six months into 2024, but already this year seems destined to go down as the year of pop culture grievances – Megan versus Nicki, Beyonce versus Nashville, but above all, of course, Kendrick Lamar versus Drake, who are currently engaged in the nastiest lyrical warfare rap fans have seen in a minute. Why so much beef, and is there ever a clear winner in these battles? I'm Aisha Harris. And today we're talking about all of the pettiness on POP CULTURE HAPPY HOUR from NPR.

Joining me today is culture writer and critic Shamira Ibrahim. Hi, Shamira. Welcome back.

SHAMIRA IBRAHIM, BYLINE: Hey, Aisha. Always happy to be here, even under contentious circumstances.

HARRIS: Oh, I know. It's great to have you here, and you're the perfect person to talk about this. The main reason we're here, actually, to talk about all this today is

the KenDrake (ph) beef of 2024. For weeks now, rappers Kendrick Lamar and Drake have been trading diss tracks, sometimes within the same hour. Their feud dates back more than a decade, but this iteration kicked off in earnest back in March, when Kendrick appeared on the track "Like That" with rapper Future and producer Metro Boomin. In it, he rejected an earlier claim made by J. Cole that he, Drake and Kendrick were rap's big three.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "LIKE THAT")

KENDRICK LAMAR: (Rapping) Motherf*** the big three, n****, it's just big me. N****, bum, what? I'm really like that. And your best work is a light pack. N****, Prince outlive Mike Jack. N****, bum...

HARRIS: J. Cole released a diss track in response, but quickly retracted it and bowed out of the feud, which I think we can all agree is probably for the best at this point.

IBRAHIM: Definitely very passionate, definitely very prescient.

HARRIS: Yes, yes, yes. But Drake took the bait and released two songs, "Taylor Made Freestyle" and "Push Ups."

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "PUSH UPS")

DRAKE: (Rapping) Pipsqueak, pipe down. You ain't in no big three. SZA got you wiped down. Travis got you wiped down. Savage got you wiped down. Like your label, boy, you in a scope right now.

HARRIS: More one-off tracks have been released by both rappers, and the attacks have only gotten more ruthless. Drake's alleged that Kendrick has been physically abusive to his longtime romantic partner, Whitney Alford, and that one of their kids together is not actually Kendrick's. Meanwhile, Kendrick claims Drake has a daughter he's kept hidden from the public and that Drake is a pedophile. This back-and-forth could be going on for a while. For all we know, in the last 30 seconds, one of them might have dropped another track. Who knows?

But we are recording Tuesday morning. So let's just start here, take a little bit of a wide zoom out. Obviously, rap battles and feuds have existed pretty much since the beginning of rap. Shamira, does this KenDrake feud have the elements of a good rap beef in your opinion?

IBRAHIM: I think we definitely witnessed something historical. And I'm not only saying that just to justify the fact that I was up at 1 a.m. frantically refreshing my YouTube feed. But, you know, I've witnessed a few big battles of my day. I was there for Kim and Foxy, Jay-Z and Nas, obviously.

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: Big and Pac is one that people consistently refer to. And so what we're seeing is a classic that is akin to those for one specific reason, which is that we're looking at two titans at the top of their respective industries really engaged in blood sport over, you know, musical instrumentation. And that is one of the things that really makes something a classic. You know, a lot of people get into back-and-forths. This is actually simultaneously happening as Chris Brown and Quavo are in a conflict right now, right?

HARRIS: Oh, God.

IBRAHIM: And that one...

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: ...Isn't getting nearly as much traction because it is one thing to see two people who have constantly been grouped with each other throughout the entire trajectory of their careers really go head-to-head over simmering tensions, as well as the long-standing debate between their respective fan groups over who is actually superior.

HARRIS: Yeah. You named them as sort of titans in the industry, but I do wonder - this is coming at a period where they are no longer sort of the newcomers.

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: They've been in this game now for over a decade. And obviously, they're two very different rappers, even though they've collaborated in the past. And they have always been kind of jabbing at each other, both subliminally and also, obviously, literally now. But, like, was this ever an even playing field? Because it seems like they're playing two different games. Like, Drake is clearly way more commercial, way more pop. But Kendrick's also commercial in a way, but he's got the Pulitzer. And of course, they're mentioning this in each of their respective diss tracks. Have the scales tipped in either which way, in your opinion?

IBRAHIM: So I think they're coming at it from two different perspectives, which I think is one of the most signature elements of a conflict like this, right? If you look at the tracks that they had gone back-and-forth with each other on, they use thematically Prince and Michael Jackson - right? - you know, as two people to compare...

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: ...Themselves against. And I think it's actually pretty apropos, right? Because Prince and Michael Jackson are known to have simmering tensions or have had simmering tensions. They have both since departed. And it was a lot about their commercial appeal versus, who was the true instrumentalist, who was the true artist, what do you have to offer to the actual market? And in a lot of ways, there are parallel circumstances here, right? Drake has indisputably dominated the hip-hop market for the better part of the last 15 years, at least the last 10, in a level of volatility that is really rare for various reasons, right? There's the mercurial nature of fan bases and how a youth-targeted market generally tends to want to be around younger people. And Drake has sort of defied those odds, right? You know, whereas Kendrick has focused on the quantity versus quality approach, right? You know? So not drowning the market with his music...

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: ...But making sure that every project is unique, distinct and can be viewed as an individual art piece. And so when you come to this conflict, you have people who feel like they have a level of moral superiority as fans, depending on which camp you're in, right? You know, oh, I'm with the true preserver of hip-hop purity versus I'm with the indisputable, most ubiquitous artist of all time, right?

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: That allows them to have those different respective camps to really go against. And ultimately, I do think, unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on where you stand, Kendrick did come out on the superior end of that quarrel, right?

HARRIS: Yeah. I mean, "Not Like Us," which, as of this recording, was the last...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...Track that Kendrick dropped, and was, I think, by pretty much all accounts, the most - it may not have been the best, depending on how you're grading these things, but it was definitely the one that just sort of - that was the...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...TKO moment. It's like, OK, you're down.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "NOT LIKE US")

LAMAR: (Raping) Hey, mustard on the beat, hoe. Deebo, any rap n****, he a free throw. Man down, call an ambulance, tell him, breathe, bro. Nail a n**** to the cross, he walk around like Teezo. What's up with these jabroni...

HARRIS: It's just so crazy to me to think that people are dancing to this song. I'm seeing videos in the clubs. I live in the East Bay, so I've heard it.

IBRAHIM: I was going to say. I was in California, and I'm sure you've heard it.

HARRIS: Oh, I have heard it. And, you know, I'm not going to lie, this is - this might be Kendrick's catchiest song ever.

IBRAHIM: He's not one for the club hit. That's not his style.

HARRIS: I know. Like, I feel like the closest he ever came to that was, like, maybe "Humble."

IBRAHIM: Right, right.

HARRIS: Or maybe "Alright," but, like...

IBRAHIM: Yeah.

HARRIS: ..."Alright," has the social activists. It's different.

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: It's really interesting to think about that and how this does feel, like you said, like, this very - tales of the time, especially within hip-hop, of, like, artistry versus commercialism. And I've been scrolling around, but, like, it doesn't seem like too many people have really come forth on either side, but if they have, it's usually in Kendrick's favor.

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: Have you seen anyone prominent trying to defend Drake?

IBRAHIM: Yeah. I mean, I think where Drake has really mastered his style of attack - in general, not just in this beef - it's like he's really found ways to maintain the youth audience. And so if you look at right now, for example, one of the most useful tactics for engaging the youth market is the online streamers, right? So you have the Kai Cenats...

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: ...The Akademiks, right? The people who have massive young followings who watch them, engage with their thoughts and their random musings, day in and day out. Drake has successfully won those people over in their camp, remained in communication with them, shared music with them early. You know, one of the more surprising things as someone who came out of the era of Funkmaster Flex drops and DJ Whoo Kid drops and Hot 97 releases is to watch that the venue for a lot of the exclusive releases on Drake's end came directly out of DJ Akademiks. He was the one who got those tracks first.

So as the conflict continued to escalate, those people with massive followings and massive young followings continued to advocate in his camp in a way that Kendrick did not necessarily get inherently. What he does have is the loyalty of the long-standing label relationship that he built his career on, TDE and a lot of the California artists that are continuing to be associated with them, as well as just the California culture at large on top of his fan base. As you were...

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: ...Probably aware, the West Coast rides together consistently, right?

HARRIS: Seriously (laughter).

IBRAHIM: And he definitely used that to his advantage, especially with the final track, "Not Like Us."

HARRIS: Another element of this that I just find very fascinating is we've got basically, like, the light-skinned dude and the dark-skinned dude - in the crudest terms. But you have Kendrick...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...Literally calling out Drake in the song "Euphoria" for being biracial.

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: And it's not just that. He also - it's about him having grown up, you know, in Toronto. And he's got these recurring themes in his later diss tracks about, like, you're not a colleague, you're a colonizer.

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: The racial aspect in the entertainment industry, and especially the colorism in the entertainment industry, is obviously a huge, huge issue. But, like, I see Kendrick sort of trying to play this game in a way that I think only lends more cred to this idea of, like, he's supposed to be this, like, kind of a hotep basically, like a - this, like (laughter)...

IBRAHIM: Right, right.

HARRIS: ...This, like, Black people's savior. What do you make of (laughter) how he threw that gauntlet out? Like...

IBRAHIM: I think the gauntlet was very strategically executed in a way that used really short retorts to encapsulate a lot of lingering criticisms around Drake, right? You know, obviously, he uses, like, the use of the N-word and how he uses it, and also just his history - documents and history around navigating race identity, including a blackface photo. I feel like that doesn't get discussed enough, right?

HARRIS: Oh, my God. Yes, that Pusha T...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...Resurfaced (laughter) from Drake's early days.

IBRAHIM: But really, to emphasize that he views Drake as an interloper. And I think that's a consistent theme in all of his tracks, where it's like, you should be yourself. What you are trying to portray right now - that image is not you. And it's not specifically that you are not Black - right? - but it's that you are overcompensating for whatever you feel like your insufficiencies are as a biracial Black person and doesn't necessarily have the formative experiences that square up with a Kendrick or other artists. Now, to be clear, some of the parties involved in this beef are Rick Ross, who also was a corrections officer for a while, right? So, you know, all of this is...

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: ...All relative.

HARRIS: This idea of authenticity.

IBRAHIM: What makes...

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: ...The critique square out for Drake is not so much his racial identity or even how he uses n**** or the N-word in casual conversation, but also just in general, the way he has navigated his career. He has been remarkably adept at navigating different subcultures within the Black diaspora, whether it will be, you know, hovering around Houston for a while or hovering around the South and, you know, then you pivot. And as Kendrick pointed out in his track, you know, "Not Like Us," you're hovering around Atlanta for a lot and going back-and-forth with different emerging artists.

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: There was around the "Views" era where he was very into the U.K. and Jamaican dancehall sound. Then he moved over to afrobeats. And so, part of it is that you are so unwilling to be yourself that you have to be everyone else. And I think Kendrick framed that very expertly. I do think it gets easily watered down to biracial people are not authentic and cannot be part of hip-hop culture, which is, first of all, just factually incorrect in the history of hip-hop - right? - and the history of Black culture. But also, I think it's just, like, an oversimplification of what Kendrick was indicating in his lyrics just because of the nature of how, you know, music can get consolidated.

HARRIS: When we're talking about that, though, what I'm curious about is sort of, like, not just obviously the sort of style in the Prince versus Michael Jackson thing, but I'm also wondering about the deeper question around how this has not just turned into, like, Drake versus Kendrick, but it's turned into, like, this battle of who's morally superior in a way that is just...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...Like, very icky because if you look on both sides, they both have...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...Things that we can critique them about. I mean, how do you see that playing out? And, like, what is this revealing to you about their artistry and also about, like, how we, the audience, who are kind of egging them on in many ways...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...Are feeding into this?

IBRAHIM: So I think it's a little bit of, you know, be careful what you wish for - right? - with regards to especially Kendrick, who dropped his album "Mr. Morale" in 2022 and hasn't really been back around since he's known for these long periods of relative quiet. A lot of people were really clamoring for him to step up and step out and really showcase, you know, a lyrical quality that came from his early battle rap days, back when TDE was just kind of more of an upstart project. And so we got that, right? We got a level of furiosity that really kind of escalated the scales, right? But I think also the current iteration of parasocial relationships - I know that's a phrase that's abused a lot - but what does come out of that is I like this artist, and I am a good person, therefore, as an extension, my favorite artist by the transitive property has to be a good person because they represent what I like.

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: Right?

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: And it creates this moral complication that makes the natural kind of skirmish of this all become very mucky, right? So now you're standing there and not only saying that, you know, Kendrick is the gatekeeper and cultural arbiter of hip-hop legitimacy and cultural authenticity, but also, he's the cultural gatekeeper for all things good and moral because he's indicting Drake for years of...

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: ...You know, rumors and speculations around his misbehavior around minors, right?

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: But how can you say that he is the person when you can look at his own record, as you pointed out, to his inconsistencies, right? You know, he is mentored by Dr. Dre, someone who has been repeatedly accused of abuse, right? His last album featured...

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: ...Kodak Black, someone who has been repeatedly accused of sexual assault and pled guilty to a charge.

HARRIS: Yes.

IBRAHIM: All of that holistically, when you look at it, you have to say, all right, we can't pretend this is a moral bright line, right?

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: Maybe it is a moral bright line that is enforced situationally but not consistently, right?

HARRIS: It doesn't seem like either of them - yes, we can say Kendrick has won, but I don't know if we can say. When I think about how many women in these...

IBRAHIM: Yeah.

HARRIS: ...Disses have caught the strays, basically, whether it's Kendrick's...

IBRAHIM: Right, right.

HARRIS: ...Longtime romantic partner or Drake's mom or Millie Bobby Brown, who, you know, is this - one of the stars of "Stranger Things." And that, I think, is one of the things that most people are aware of when it comes to Drake and the rumors around him. And...

IBRAHIM: Right, right.

HARRIS: ...She talked about texting with Drake when she was, you know, a minor, and she clearly, at least based on these interviews that she's given, she seems to have seen it as harmless. But when you look back on it feels like there's, like, a potential for this to be perhaps, like, a sort of, like, Hannibal Buress moment. I've seen people sort of comment on that where it's like...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...You know, Hannibal Buress...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...Made kind of a one-off joke about Bill Cosby, and then that sort of opened the floodgates...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...For people to probe a little bit deeper. And I do wonder if Kendrick - the allegations of physical abuse against Kendrick, of course, are terrible, but I think we as a society treat, you know, what Drake is being accused of far more seriously than we do physical abuse of women. And I do wonder, you know, what that means. And he has - so far, I don't think his money is being hurt yet, but I do wonder if this - that could be the potential fallout for what we're seeing here. But again, this goes back to, like, so many rap beefs. Women are often - when I think about the Tupac and the Biggie and how Tupac claimed to have slept with Biggie's wife, like...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...I don't know. I hope that we are having better conversations about this, and I'm seeing plenty of people having those conversations. But I do still wonder if the entertainment factor of it all is kind of overshadowing that.

IBRAHIM: Yeah. So I think that the safety of women has often been found disposable in the space of a public feud, music or otherwise, right? But since we're focusing on music, I have been going back the past couple of days to think about this. And one of the earliest rap beefs is Roxanne Shante.

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: Right? You know, you had the Roxanne Wars. That was UTFO's song "Roxanne Roxanne," which, you know, mocked a woman for rejecting their advances. A young, teenage Roxanne Shante from Queensbridge steps up to the plate just to play in a speculative exercise, but it becomes a moment. It becomes a lot of people trying to find their moment in the sun and - at the early years of hip-hop by piling on in response to Roxanne. And, again, this is a teenage girl. And the responses go from, you know, Roxanne is a b****, which is already, you know, inappropriate enough to...

HARRIS: And she was, like, what, four - like...

IBRAHIM: Fifteen...

HARRIS: Fifteen.

IBRAHIM: At that time.

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: Yeah. And so that is the inception of one of the most, you know, known beefs in history and one of the earliest ones. So it just kind of shows you the inception of where women's experiences are proved as disposable for the back and forth, right? Where we are currently, again, I think we're kind of stuck in this paradox where a lot of fans feel the need to engage in a level of cognitive dissonance, right? The art of blood sporting music, at best, is a speculative exercise that highly sensationalizes long-standing rumors, right? So...

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: ...Now everyone's scrolling through Whitney's Instagram feed or scrolling through all of the alleged names that have been said of women associated to Drake, and they're the ones who now have to contend with a conflict they never even invited themselves to.

HARRIS: I mean, I want to zoom out because, like, that leads me to the question of, like, how low is too low or is there a bar? Because when I think about what's going on here, I also think about a beef from earlier this year - Megan Thee Stallion versus Nicki.

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: Megan was - she didn't name names, but there were some things that suggested...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...We knew who some of those targets were, including, well, Drake, but also...

IBRAHIM: Right.

(LAUGHTER)

HARRIS: But also Nicki...

IBRAHIM: I was like, Kendrick definitely borrowed a few insults from Megan in that battle.

HARRIS: Seriously. But also Nicki Minaj. And that led to the - so the song Megan dropped was "Hiss," and that actually became a Billboard Hot 100 at No. 1...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...For a second. Nicki sort of - of course, Nicki, we know she loves to get angry with people (laughter) and sic her stans on them. But she comes back with "Big Foot," and "Big Foot" is her just laughing about Megan Thee Stallion's dead mother.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "BIG FOOT")

NICKI MINAJ: (Singing) How you f*** your mother man when she die? How you go on Gayle King and can't cry? Chile, bye, Big Foot, but you still a small fry.

IBRAHIM: It's funny that you bring up "Big Foot," right? Because if you recall, when "Big Foot" came out, it was roundly mocked, right?

HARRIS: It's pretty terrible. I'm sorry (laughter).

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: It's so bad.

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: It's as bad as Drake's response to...

IBRAHIM: Oh, yeah, "The Heart Part 6."

HARRIS: "The Heart Part 6."

IBRAHIM: Yes.

HARRIS: It's as...

IBRAHIM: Yeah.

HARRIS: ...Bad as that (laughter).

IBRAHIM: Yeah. I would argue probably worse.

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: And I think the big mistake that she made wasn't actually in the gravity of the insults, which were, as you mentioned, pretty below the belt. But because she didn't engage in good musicianship, right? You know? And so...

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: ...When you don't engage in good musicianship, it forces people to contend with the actual lyrics that you're saying, which were sub par to most people who were consuming it. The actual cruelty of what Kendrick did in making a club banger in less than a day is now there are going to be people in a club screaming certified pedophile, right? That's actually...

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: It's hard for me to actually wrap my mind around the idea of being at a Brooklyn summer party, like, a block party or a rooftop party, and hearing that and knowing people are going to scream it loud.

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: I know it's going to happen.

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: I don't know if I'm ready for it to happen, right?

HARRIS: It's already happening, I'm sure (laughter).

IBRAHIM: And so, I think it shows a couple of things. You'll get away with a lot if you actually make it into a good song.

HARRIS: Right.

IBRAHIM: If you're able to show your dedication to craft, right? And I think the second thing is that we have gotten to a place where I don't want to say that we haven't evolved - right? - but we've set a place where we can acknowledge that one of the worst things you could do is engage in gender-based violence or violence against marginalized communities. And we can acknowledge it even speculatively in the space as a bad thing, right? But the worst part is the insult, not necessarily the harm, right? So, people aren't sitting with what that - if that harm is tangible, if it's real. What does that actually mean? What does it mean about the fact that these artists have been circling around each other, maybe knowing of each other's harm in the industry...

HARRIS: Right.

IBRAHIM: ...But not working to rectify it? And what does that mean for the people that have been around them in the industry? More so, we've landed at the place where the worst thing that could happen is to be accused of something 'cause that can ruin your life, as opposed to the step prior to that, which is, how do you prevent these things from being a reality in the industry or outside the industry?

HARRIS: Yeah.

IBRAHIM: And I think that's something that we have to continue to contend with. We haven't - we've moved the needle - I don't want to pretend we haven't, but there's still a long way to go.

HARRIS: Well, Shamira, I think that's a good place to leave it for now. Although, who knows, we might be coming back to this. Like you, I hope there aren't too many more...

IBRAHIM: Right.

HARRIS: ...Diss...

IBRAHIM: I think my - I'm at my capacity of new tracks. But, you know, we shall see.

HARRIS: I think we all are. But thank you so much. And that brings us to the end of our show. Shamira Ibrahim, it was such a pleasure to have you break down this kind of year of pettiness so far.

IBRAHIM: Always happy to chat with you.

HARRIS: This episode was produced by Hafsa Fathima and Mike Katzif and edited by Jessica Reedy. And Hello Come In provides our theme music. Thanks so much for listening to POP CULTURE HAPPY HOUR from NPR. I'm Aisha Harris. We'll see you all tomorrow.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

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